

**Salem School Committee  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Wednesday, September 1, 2021 at 5:15 pm using the Zoom platform.

**Members Present:** Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Ms. Mary Manning, Ms. Amanda Campbell, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, and Mr. Manny Cruz, and Mr. James Fleming

**Members Absent:** None

**Others in Attendance:** Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone, Chelsea Banks, Linda Farinelli, Adam Colantuoni, Marc Leblanc and Special Guest: Matthew Rodriguez

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Vice chair Manning called the School Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

Dr. Zrike gave an update on the start of school. He explained that he went to all the schools and they all looked good. He also thanked the custodians for their hard work preparing the buildings and food services. He also extended thanks to the parents that started the movement for outside initiatives which include outside activities and breaks. The challenges we are currently facing are with traffic and transportation. We have been experiencing a lot of delays with buses. Some of the challenges are new start times, new stops and road construction. He reported that we also have heating and cooling controls issues at the schools. He explained that we have ventilation, but there is a problem with the computers for the controls that need to be updated to be able to regulate the heating and cooling. We added that we also need to be clear with families regarding the test to stay program. He explained that if there is a positive test in the home, students need to stay home. They can only test at school if there is a close contact at school. He stated that additional information will be sent for clarification on how the program works.

Ms. Manning asked about the issues at the Carlton School. Dr. Zrike explained that mold was found in the kitchen. A company came in and confirmed that it is only on the surface and is being caused by a bathroom that is attached to the kitchen. There is also a refrigerator unit that may be causing it. The area has been cleaned and they will provide a report once it is complete.

Ms. Campbell asked for clarification regarding the late bus registration. Dr. Zrike confirmed that the late registration was pertaining to transportation.

Mayor Driscoll entered at 5:37 pm.

### **Presentation and Discussion with Matt Rodriguez from The Equity Imperative**

Dr. Zrike introduced Matt Rodriguez from The Equity Imperative. Mr. Rodriguez recently spoke at the beginning of the year's convocation and will be conducting anti-racism work with the Salem Public Schools.

Matt Rodriguez shared his presentation and explained our partnership as follows:

- student voice
- thought partnership & support
- educator learning experience

The work of Matthew and team is done with YPAR (Youth Participatory Action Research) in mind. The YPAR is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based in social justice principles in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.

His presentation shows a roadmap of how the work begins and fits into the district work. He outlines having orientation for mentors and students who participate is leading the equity initiative in the district. Those chosen will receive professional learning experiences throughout the school year. He continues that there will be individual support and mentor support to lead to how the schools and all involved can navigate the dynamics of equity throughout the school year and the district.

He shares the educator learning experience will be done through asynchronous and synchronous in a meaningful way to expect the most transformation. The Equity Imperative will be guides and supports through this work.

He shares the work raises hope and healing through active anti-racism. He explains the access the School Committee will have to the portal where they can view the videos and intent of the work. He references Dr. Beverly Tatum and a text that highlights an analogy of white supremacy and becoming actively anti-racist.

Mayor spoke about the presentation and shared gratitude for his presentation this evening along with the convocation presentation.

Mr. Cruz asked questions regarding the advocacy piece. He appreciates the focus is on students and their voice, but what is the process for helping staff identify issues. Mr. Rodriguez shares that the process needs to be organic to have students and adults change and transform to make an inclusive environment for all.

Ms. Manning asked if there is an expectation that staff will also go through the same process. Also are paraprofessional part of this program or is it just for teachers? Dr. Zrike responded that every staff member is part of the process.

Ms. Nuncio asked if there was any feedback from the exercise held at the convocation. Ms. Farinelli added she felt that it was a strong message. Ms. Carbone stated that being in schools and speaking with teachers there is a resounding feeling of hope that change is possible and there is focus and conversation on the table. People are ready to have important conversations and look at practices that lead to disparities.

Ms. Campbell heard that staff enjoyed the initial experience and gives everyone a common language and common ground to have the difficult conversations. People are appreciative especially those that have been eager to have such conversations but have been nervous or concerned to do so. It allows folks to process it and leads to the advocacy piece. The connection that teachers are feeling and having the common experience has been great. She notes this is allowing teachers to see and feel how we actively become anti-racist instead of just hearing it as a buzz word through the work.

Dr. Pangallo asked if we are thinking about having more of these conversations as a school committee in reviewing TEI modules. Mayor Driscoll shares that she is interested in reviewing the modules and being able to be grounded in the work and conversations. Dr. Pangallo asks the broader question of if the committee as a group is open to having more discussions such as this.

Mr. Cruz said if there are opportunities for the committee to be listeners and observe the conversations would be helpful for the committee. He shares there is a disconnect when it comes to the governance level and what's happening on the ground and having the opportunity to sit-in on conversations would be helpful. Ms. Campbell shares excitement to review the modules but also notes that she thinks it's important for the schools to have their own space to have these conversations and including outside people and especially a SC member would maybe stifle some of the real conversation. She notes the context behind this statement that the SC members don't have personal relationships with everybody at the school level, and because the nature of the dynamic of the group including a SC member could be uncomfortable for educators within the specific setting. She wants to be involved in the conversations and continue this work forward but with regard to what's most comfortable and within the right setting. Ms. Manning agrees, they do not want to be involved in school-based conversations as it could change the tone of the conversations. Mr. Cruz clarifies his note regarding the opportunities surrounding connecting with the schools at the discretion of the Superintendent.

Dr. Zrike said he thinks we will see many more people finding their voice for equity and as a district we need to make sure we are ready to act on their questions and concerns. He added, it is a testament to all the hard work that has been done in the district before this was even started.

## **Adjournment**

Mayor Driscoll requested a motion to adjourn the School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting this evening. Ms. Manning motioned and Mr. Fleming seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Manning	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Nuncio	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes
Mayor Driscoll	Yes
Motion carries 7-0	

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Nancy A. Weiss*

*and*

*Jensen Frost*

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & the Superintendent  
and

Executive Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent